

**CONGRESSMAN BOUCHER ANNOUNCES FEDERAL FUNDING FOR  
EXPANSION OF BLAND COUNTY WIRELESS HIGH SPEED INTERNET NETWORK**

**\$99,000 Grant Will Expand High-Speed Internet Access in  
the Communities of Bland, Bastian, and Rocky Gap**

(Washington, D.C.) - U.S. Representative Rick Boucher announced today that, at his urging, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, through its Rural Development Agency, is providing a federal grant in the amount of \$99,000 to expand high-speed wireless Internet access in Bland County. The funding will be used to build a high-speed wireless network which will extend north from the town of Bland along I-77 to the communities of Rocky Gap and Bastian. Residents and businesses in these communities will be able to connect to the network wirelessly, greatly reducing the cost of delivering high speed Internet services over the "last mile";

"Bland County began delivering high-speed Internet service to town of Bland residents through a truly innovative and highly affordable means when it launched its high speed wireless Internet network last year. With the federal funding I am announcing today that network will be extended to other communities in Bland and will represent a major step towards delivering high-speed Internet service to all Bland County residents," Boucher said.

With the benefit of the federal funds announced today Bland County will purchase and install point to point connections to extend the existing highspeed Internet network in the town of Bland to the Bastain and Rocky Gap communities. The point to point connections between these communities will create a highspeed wireless Internet backbone which homes and businesses will be able to connect to through the use of WiFi and wireless mesh technologies.

Wireless high-speed Internet networks hold considerable promise for large rural areas such as Southwest Virginia. Because the units which make up and carry the network communicate with each other wirelessly, the cost that localities must pay to deliver broadband services is greatly reduced. By not having to run wires to connect homes and businesses to the fiber optic backbone, the network can be easily built out by adding wireless units.

"The access to affordable high-speed Internet is essential for the purpose of attracting industries seeking locations for expansion and aiding locally-owned small businesses in expanding operations. I am pleased that the Rural Development Agency has provided this measure of federal funding to further these goals in Bland County," Boucher concluded.

In addition to the \$99,000 federal grant announced today, the expansion of the Bland County wireless network is being enabled by funding from Bland County, the Commonwealth of Virginia, as well as private investment.

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